

Chapter 15: Grade Ten – World History, Culture, and Geography: The Modern World Chapter of the History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools. Page 469. Lines 913 ~ 919: “Comfort Women,” a euphemism for sexual ~~~ forced into these situations during Japanese occupation.

The history of comfort women is highly disputed between the nations of S. Korea and Japan, and hyperboles abound. As the education of children is important, it is essential that all claims are carefully confirmed before teaching them as uncontested facts. Please consider the following points:

(1) Lines 917-919: “most argue that hundreds of thousands of women were forced into these situations during Japanese occupation.” EVIDENCE BASED FINDINGS: All historians and scholars agree that the exact number of comfort women is uncertain [Refs. 1,2]. However, estimates by scholars who conduct research on this topic range typically in the tens of thousands [Refs. 1,3]. Although “most” activists and politically-based groups claim the number is “hundreds of thousands,” reputable scholars generally do not state such a high number.

(2) Lines 913-915. “‘Comfort Women,’ a euphemism for sexual slaves, were taken by the Japanese Army in occupied territories before and during the war.” FINDINGS: Scholars and researchers have confirmed the most Korean comfort women were recruited by civilians (not the Japanese Army), served for defined periods of time, were often paid (or their families paid), and were allowed to return home. [Refs 1-4] As such, many scholars explicitly do not use the expression “sexual slavery”, as it would be misleading. The expression “sexual slaves” was popularized by, inter alia, lawyers filing lawsuits, activists, politicians, and journalists conveying what others said, and thus now permeates the Internet and media.

(3) Lines 915-917. “‘Comfort Women’ can be taught as an example of institutionalized sexual slavery, and one of the largest cases of human trafficking in the twentieth century.” EVIDENCE BASED FINDINGS: As the number of comfort women is uncertain (see above), it would be inappropriate to claim outright that it is “one of the largest cases of human trafficking” of the last century. Again, many neutral scholars explicitly avoid the expression “sexual slavery”, as it would be misleading. A small fraction of comfort women in territories Japan occupied during the war (e.g., Indonesia) were forcibly acquired by local military personnel, but this was done by soldiers acting independently [Ref. 1]. The women were freed after about two months when a higher ranking officer discovered the situation, and the personnel responsible were later punished.

Few things are more important than children's education, and it is crucial that history be taught in a fair, neutral, and fact-based way. The tragic results of history being taught in a biased way can be seen in the Middle East, where past misdeeds are often exaggerated and only one side's version of events is presented. We urge that the proposed additions (lines 913-919) be shelved until their veracity is confirmed/disproved in a neutral and unbiased way, e.g., by consulting scholars who have conducted in-person research in this field, such as Prof. C. Sarah Soh (San Francisco State University), and Prof. Yuha Park (Sejong University, S. Korea), and Prof. George Akita (University of Hawaii).

References: [1] C. Sarah Soh, "The Comfort Women," University of Chicago Press, Chicago (2008). [2] Yuha Park, "Comfort Women of the Empire," Asahi Shimbun Publications (2014). [3] Ikuhito Hata, "No Organized or Forced Recruitment: Misconceptions about Comfort Women and the Japanese Military," Professor Emeritus, Nihon University. [4] United States Office of War Information Report No. 49, 1944 (All Refs at <http://goo.gl/9xM3LL>)

Thank you for your time and consideration,